

AN IMPORTANT HISTORY.

LETTER FROM GENERAL JOHNSTON TO THE PRESIDENT... THE FIRST BATTLE OF MANASSAS—IMPORTANT HISTORICAL ERRORS CORRECTED—WHAT THE CONFEDERATE VICTORY ACCOMPLISHED—WHY WASHINGTON CITY WAS NOT CAPTURED, ETC., ETC. SULLIVAN, March 21.—Editors of *Southern Daily Messenger*:—Gentlemen:—The "Life of Lieutenant-General (Stonewall) Jackson," by a member of his staff, will be read by the general public in the South. It is, therefore, important to me to endeavor to correct the errors relating to myself which I observed in glancing over that part of the work preceding and referring to the battle of Manassas. On that account I respectfully ask the publication of what follows, in your paper:—

Pages 166-7.—When General Johnston, however, arrived at Harper's Ferry, and ordered to relieve Colonel Jackson of his command, the latter had received no directions from the State Government to surrender his trust. And here arose a temporary collision between the two authorities, which displayed the inflexibility of Jackson's character. He replied that he had been entrusted by Major-General Lee, at the command of the State of Virginia, with this charge; and he could only relinquish it by his orders. In this position he was, while respectably immovable; and as the Confederate commander was equally firm, a mischievous strife was anxiously feared. But very soon the mails brought an application from General Lee, pertaining to Colonel Jackson's command, upon which was indorsed, in the handwriting of Major-General Lee, a reference to the authority of General Johnston, as commanding at Harper's Ferry. This rushed Colonel Jackson all the defence which he desired, to justify the surrender of the trust.

I think that this statement magnifies the circumstance in question, and does injustice to General Jackson's character. The State of Virginia had joined the Confederacy and transferred the control of its military affairs to the President several weeks before my arrival at Harper's Ferry, on the 23d of May, 1861. Within an hour after my arrival General (then Colonel) Jackson came to see me, and the order assigning me to the command he had been exercising was shown to him. On the following morning my order assuming the command was sent to him, with a request, in writing, that he would have the necessary number of copies made and distributed to the troops. After acknowledging my note and order he wrote:—"Until I receive further instructions from Governor Letcher or General Lee; I do not feel at liberty to transfer my command to another, and must, therefore, decline publishing the order. Meanwhile, I beg you to be assured that it will give me pleasure to afford counsel and aid in every manner every facility in my power for obtaining appropriate information relating to the post and departments of the service connected with it." Major Whiting, who fell in defense of Fort Fisher as Major-General, a West Point associate of General Jackson, at my request presented to him that the authority of the Confederate Government was paramount in the case, and the manner of transferring the command in accordance with military rule. He soon reported General Jackson convinced. The whole affair occupied little more time than was consumed in going back and back from my quarters to General Jackson's. There was no display of inflexibility on his part, nor exhibition of firmness on mine. There was nothing in the affair to call forth these qualities. If there was any collision between the two authorities I was not conscious of it, as well as of the danger of "mischievous strife."

Page 201.—"On this expedition Colonel Jackson was ordered by General Johnston to destroy the locomotives and cars of the Baltimore and Annapolis Railroad. At this village there were vast workshops for the construction and repair of these cars; and more than forty of the finest locomotives, with three hundred burden cars, were now destroyed. Concerning the work, it was a sad work; but I had my orders, my duty was to obey. If the cost of the property could only have been expended in disseminating the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, how much might have been expected!"

"That this invaluable property should have been withdrawn to Winchester by the way of Harper's Ferry, before this point was evacuated, is too plain to be argued. Who was the blunderer cannot be ascertained; that it was General Jackson's appears from the extract of his letter just inserted."

The letter quoted does not refer to the removal of the property, and, therefore, furnishes no evidence on the subject. It only expresses the natural regret of a good man at a great destruction of property, rendered necessary by a state of war. If Colonel Jackson had thought the suggested removal right, he would have attempted it while in command at Harper's Ferry, between the 29th of April and 24th of May, as I should have done between the last date and 15th of June. General Jackson's course was probably prompted by the consideration that directed mine, and given the authority of his great character to my course. It would not have been right on our part to seize the property of the road before the evacuation of Harper's Ferry, nor politic to commit such an act of war against citizens of Maryland, when we were receiving so much aid from that State; and hoping for so much more. The seizure or destruction of that property by us could have been justified only by the probability of its military use to the enemy. That probability did not appear until about the time when Colonel Jackson received the order in question; then, being unable to remove, we were compelled to destroy it.

Page 211.—"Accordingly, the army of the Valley, numbering about 11,000 men, was ordered under arms." Pages 212-13.—"The forced march of thirty miles brought the army to Piedmont station, at the eastern base of the Blue Ridge, whence they hoped to reach their destination more easily by railroad. General Jackson's infantry was placed upon trains there on the forenoon of Friday (the 19th of July), while the artillery and cavalry continued their march by the country roads." "The president of the railroad company promised that the whole army should be transported on successive trains to Manassas Junction by the morning of Saturday; but by a collision, which was, with great appearance of reason, attributed to treachery, the track was obstructed, and all the remaining troops detained without any provision for their subsistence for two precious days. Had they been provided with food, and ordered to continue their forced march, their zeal would have brought the whole to the field long before the commencement of the battle."

It is twenty-three, not thirty miles from Winchester to Piedmont, and thirty-four thence to Manassas. Jackson's brigade reached Piedmont early on Friday; but the other troops arrived at the usual time of ending a day's march—making two marches of this distance twenty-three miles. At that rate, the thirty-four miles remaining would have consumed nearly three days, and the troops, if they had marched on with the least practicable delay, would have arrived at the scene of action the day after the battle. Jackson's might have reached it on Sunday night. The author said his army amounted to 11,000 men. More than 8000 of them were in the battle, conveyed on trains, the first of which arrived at Manassas on Friday evening, and the last about noon on Sunday. The detention of the remainder was due to the wretched mismanagement of the railroad trains. The only collision occurred on Saturday night, of a train bearing the 6th North Carolina Regiment and an empty one returning. The regiment was carried on, reached Manassas Station on Sunday morning, and took part in the battle. Eizey's Brigade, on another train passed over the place of collision soon after the occurrence, and reached Manassas Station soon after noon on Sunday. The facts prove that the track was not obstructed, at least not seriously. None of the troops were left without any provisions for their subsistence. If any of them suffered for want of food, it was in consequence of throwing away their rations, then not unusual on a march. We left Winchester with such provisions as we had the means of transporting, and had enough for two days after the arrival of the troops at Manassas, on Monday. The author asserts that all the remaining troops (Jackson's infantry being placed on trains) were detained at Piedmont two days without food. These troops got to Piedmont on Friday afternoon, and the battle began on Sunday morning, not much more than one marching day after their arrival at Piedmont. About 8300 of the 11,000 at which he estimates the Army of the Shenandoah, were engaged in the battle; therefore but 2700 could have been detained at Piedmont. The fact that these troops were two days in marching twenty-three miles from Winchester to Piedmont, shows that they could not have marched thirty-four miles from Piedmont to the scene of action in less than two days, and that the only hope of getting them into the battle was by the railroad.

Pages 215-16.—"The plan of battle which was adopted after the disclosure of the designs of Beauregard, who suggested, and of Johnston, who accepted it. This was to send the two reserve brigades which were at hand to sustain the shock upon the left, and to enable that wing of the army to hold its ground for a time, while the centre and right were advanced across Bull Run, and swung around into a position parallel to the enemy's line of march towards the Stone Bridge, with the view of scuffling their rear guard and their line of communication at Centreville."

"The plan of battle," so extolled by the author, was made impracticable by McDowell's turning movement, and, therefore, was abandoned when the "designs of the enemy were fully disclosed." The movements of Lee and Jackson to the left, so far from being the consequence of the disclosure of the enemy's plans, preceded that discovery; indeed, it was Lee's encounter with the Federal army which revealed to me its designs, and "such reinforcements as could be spared from the centre and right" were then ordered to hasten to the firing. The plan the author supposes and admires would have kept our centre and right (six brigades) out of action, and enabled the Federal army to crush the other three. Centreville was three and a half miles north of our centre on Bull Run, and the field of battle was a mile and a half south of our original left on Bull Run; so that it is clear that the troops which might have moved to Centreville in the beginning of the action could by no possibility have reached the field in time to take part in it, but would have assisted McDowell in his turning operation, and made it impossible to prevent his seizure of our depot at Manassas.

Page 216-17.—"The two generals despatched the order for this movement to the commanders of the right and centre, and then galloped for the scene of action."

Not orders for the movement supposed, but countermanding it, and directing troops from the centre and right to march rapidly to the fight.

Page 217.—" * * * and Beauregard, after listening to anxious suspense to hear his guns open upon the heights of Centreville, until the day and the battle were too far advanced for any order to be sent, relinquished the movement." "The only tactics which remained for the Confederate Generals were to bring up such reinforcements as could be spared from the centre and right successfully."

General Beauregard could not have listened for the opening of guns on the heights of Centreville, for none had been sent there. McDowell's turning movement was revealed by Lee not earlier than 10. If the centre and right had then been ordered to Centreville, as the author states, they could not have reached it until, if at all, before 2 P. M. If those troops had been ordered into the action they could not have joined in it, it would have been too late. As it was, with the three and a half brigades ordered up, two were too late, although those orders were despatched at least as early as 11 o'clock A. M.

This account of the battle does great injustice to General Beauregard and to Lee's and Early's brigades and their commanders. General Jackson's great fame is in no degree enhanced by such disparagement of his associates.

Page 230.—"The pursuit of the enemy was not continued beyond Centreville, and this was the first error which made the laurels of the Confederate army, so far, to the eye, barren of substantial fruit. It was accounted for, in part, by the paucity of cavalry; but this excuse was unjustified, because the cavalry in hand, of which only two companies had been engaged in the actual combat, was not pertinaciously pressed after the fugitives, but paused even before it met with any solid resistance among them." "The substantial fruit" of this victory was the preservation of the Confederacy. No more could have been hoped for. The pursuit of the enemy was not continued, because our cavalry (a very small force) was driven back by the "solid resistance" of the United States infantry. Its rear guard was an entire division, which had not been engaged, and was twice or fifteen times more numerous than our two little bodies of cavalry. The infantry was not required to continue the pursuit, because it would have been harassing it to no purpose. It is well known that infantry, unencumbered by baggage trains, can easily escape pursuing infantry. Napoleon's victories of Lutzen and Bautzen are strong instances. I maintain that, considering the relative strength of the belligerents, the Southern people could not have hoped for more "substantial fruits" of this victory. The defeat of the Confederate army would have involved the immediate overthrow of the Confederacy.

enemy wandering through the country, that a powerful Federal force was about to attack the lines of Bull Run near Union Mill, where they were now denuded of defenders. This caused them to recall the fresher regiments from the chase, and send them upon a forced march of seven or eight miles, to meet an imaginary enemy, and to return next morning to the scene of battle."

We had, of course, but one commanding general—myself. The story of the "alarmed scout" and "bewildered picket" is doubtless intended for sarcastic ridicule, not fact. It is out of place in a biography of Jackson. No troops were recalled from the chase and sent seven or eight miles by night, or day "to meet an imaginary enemy." Holmes' brigade, which arrived too late to join in the battle or pursuit, and Kwell's, reported by its commander to be four miles off after the fight was over, were ordered to return to their camps, for the comfort of the men, and to spare Ewell's needless march. The latter, in his conversation with me, said that the Federal troops, which had been facing our centre and right during the day, were reported to be advancing. He agreed with me, however, that if this was true, they would soon be recalled to serve as a rear guard. Still, he and Holmes were cautioned to be on their guard. No soldier was ordered by me to march, in consequence of this report, or exposed to discomfort or fatigue. No troops were ordered to the "field of battle" next day, except those detailed to collect the arms, etc. Our infantry which pursued the enemy from the field, finding their pursuit ineffectual, soon abandoned it.

Page 231.—"It was expected that the Confederate commanders would at least pursue the enemy to the gates of their intrenchments before Alexandria and Washington; and it was hoped that it might not be impracticable, in the agency of the confederate army, to recover the glorious city, to conquer the hostile capital, with its immense spoils, and to emancipate oppressed Maryland by its happy blow."

These expectations and hopes were expressed at the time, not by military men who understood the state of affairs, but by the same military critics of the press who had but a little while before, in a denunciation on me for the measure which averted the capture of our army in the valley, and enabled it to preserve the Confederacy at Manassas—the abandonment of Harper's Ferry. Such a pursuit would have been fruitless. We could not have carried the intrenchments named by assault, and had none of the means to besiege them. Our assault would have been repulsed, and the enemy, then become the victorious party, would have resumed their march to Richmond. But if we had captured the intrenchments, a river a mile wide lay between them and Washington, commanded by the heavy guns of a Federal fleet. If we had taken Alexandria, which stands on low and level ground, those guns would have driven us out of it in a few hours, at the same time killing our friends the inhabitants. We could not cross the Potomac, and, therefore, it was impracticable to "conquer the hostile capital" or "emancipate oppressed Maryland." The failure of our invasions in 1862 and 1863, with far greater means, might convince the Southern people, I think, that the author's expectations were extravagant.

Page 231.—"The tolling army, which had marched and fought all along the hills of Bull Run through the long July day, demanded, with enthusiasm, to be led after the flying foe, and declared they would march the soles of their feet in so glorious an errand without a murmur." My information of the disposition of the army was very different. According to it, the troops believed that their victory had established the independence of the South—that all their country required of them had been accomplished—the war ended, and their military obligations fulfilled. They therefore left the army in crowds, to return to their homes. Such was the report of the generals, colonels, staff officers, and railroad officials. The exultation of victory cost us more than the Federal army lost by defeat.

Page 231.—"But more than this; the morning after the battle saw an aggregate of ten thousand fresh men, composed of the remainder of the Army of the Valley, who had at length reached the scene, and of reinforcements from Richmond, arriving at the intrenchment at Richmond from Manassas Junction, who were burning with enthusiasm, and expected nothing else than to be led against the enemy at once."

I have no records; but, according to my recollection, the Sixth South Carolina Regiment constituted the only reinforcement from Richmond at the time referred to. On page 211 of the Army of the Valley is estimated at 11,000. So that less than 2700 men of that army must have arrived the day after the battle as more than 8300 were engaged in it. I am confident that if we had marched a few days after the battle to "conquer Washington" and "emancipate Maryland," we should not have brought 20,000 men to the banks of the Potomac. Our men, as has been already said, believed the contest decided—their objects achieved—and were more disposed to go home to enjoy the independence and glory they had won than to renew the war on Northern soil.

Pages 231-232.—"In a few days [the patriotic citizens of Alexandria sent authentic intelligence of the capture of the beaten rabble there and in Washington, which a true military sagacity would have anticipated, as Jackson did, without actual testimony." No such intelligence was sent to me. Nor were the Federal troops south of the Potomac a rabble. Mansfield's, Miles', and Runyan's divisions, a larger force than we could have brought against them, had not been beaten or engaged, and the reports of the commanders of the brigades engaged, show that they entered the intrenchments organized, except those who fell individually from the field. These latter undoubtedly gave an exaggerated idea of the rout to the people of Washington; as those from our ranks met by the President before he reached Manassas, on his way to the field, convinced him that our army had been defeated.

Page 232.—"For days there was neither organization or obedience, nor thought of resistance on the South side of the Potomac." This assertion is unfounded. It is disproved by the reports of the Federal general officers, and the fact that General Scott, who had near 25,000 men idle within twenty-four hours of Washington, brought up none of them, and that the President, Cabinet, and members of Congress seem to have been unconscious of danger, or such a state of things as that described.

Page 233.—"Now, then, said the more reflecting, was the time for vigorous audacity. Now a Napoleonic genius, were he present, would make this another Jena in its splendid truth." He would firmly press upon the gates of Washington, and replenishing his exhausted equipments with the mighty spoils, rush blazing, like the lightning that shineth from on high, upon the heaven to the other, through the affrighted North."

The author surely does not expect rational readers to believe that this bombast was really uttered in the army, or that our soldiers condemned their General for not being "a Napoleonic genius," when but one is found in all history. The "splendid fruits" of the battle of Jena were due to the fact that Napo-

leon, with about equal force, turned the Prussian army before defeating it. Had it been able to take refuge in intrenchments covering the passage of a river a mile wide, those "fruits" would have been less than ours—which were, the preservation of the Confederacy, for the time.

The masses referred to were less disorganized by defeat than our army by triumph. By "gate of Washington" is meant, I suppose, the fortifications upon the rocks of the engineers, commanding the mouth of the United States, were engaged for several months—manned by double our numbers, half of whom had not seen the battle—and a river a mile wide, commanded by the guns of the United States fleet. We attempted invasion in 1862, and again in 1863. First, after Gen. Lee's victories over McClellan and Pope, and Jackson's over Banks, Fremont, and Shields. The second time, when the way was supposed to have been opened by the effect of the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

On these occasions, the forces defeated were ten times as great as those repulsed on the 21st of July, 1861, and their losses twenty times as great. Yet those defeated armies met us at Sharpsburg and Gettysburg, so strengthened in numbers and spirit as to send back the war into Virginia. These events show how far, in July, 1861, our army could have "rushed blazing" through the North (and it could have crossed the Potomac), and how much the North would have been "rightened." The failure of invasions conducted by Lee, aided by Longstreet and Jackson, and attempted under such circumstances, proves that the Confederacy was too weak for offensive war, and is a conclusive argument in favor of the course against which the author declaims so vehemently.

Page 233.—"He (General Jackson) was then compelled to sit silent, and see the noble army, with its enthusiastic recruits, withdrawing away in inaction on the plains of Bull Run, now doubly pestilential from the miasma of the August heats, and the stench of the battle-field; under camp levers ten-fold more fatal than all the bullets of the enemy. Regiments demoralized, under the scourge, to skeletons; and the rude, temporary hospitals acquired trains of graves far more numerous and extensive than those upon the hills around the Stone Ridge."

If General Jackson had seen this state of things described above, he could not have been compelled to "sit silent." He would have done his duty by protesting his brigade from the effects of such wretched incompetence, by remonstrating to the General, and if that proved ineffective, by appeal to the Government. His silence proves that he did not see the evils his biographer describes.

It is well known that large bodies of new troops are sickly in all climates. Our sick reports were larger in the healthy climate of the valley than at the time referred to. No troops were then encamped in the valley of Bull Run, or nearer to the "battle-field" than four or five miles. The dead had been buried, so that the ladies visited the field without inconvenience. The writer's own estimate, and General Beauregard's very strongly contradicted this account of our great losses by disease. He estimates the army of the valley at 11,000 when it left Winchester. General Beauregard reported his to be about 21,000, including 1500 mounted men, and the garrison of Manassas (2000 soldiers and seamen), in all about 32,000; deducting 1833 lost in battle, leaves 30,167—not estimating the thousands who went home in the belief that their victory had terminated the war. On page 230 the author says, after "forces had grown to about 60,000 men," the Confederate generals "pushed their lines forward to Munson's and Mason's Hills." This was early in September. According to this the army had then been increased by the difference between 60,000 and 30,167—29,833. If my recollection is correct, it had received since the battle ten regiments—one from South Carolina, one from North Carolina, one from Texas, one from Alabama, two from Mississippi, and four from Georgia, averaging less than 900 men. So that these reinforcements amounted to not more than 6000, leaving 23,833 as the growth of the regiments represented to have "dwinded, under the scourge, to skeletons." But these assertions—that our regiments dwindled to skeletons during August, and that the army had grown to about 60,000 men early in September, are altogether incorrect. I have contrasted them to show the carelessness of the author's assertions. The battle and its consequences reduced our army to about 27,000 men. When its advanced guard occupied Munson's and Mason's Hills early in September, it had received since the battle not more than 6000. So that its strength then was little more than half of the biographer's estimate.

Page 236.—"The wearied Confederate soldiers did not find the rain any the less dreary on the next day, because they were either counter-marched up the hills of Bull Run, or left to crouch on the battle-field in fence corners without tents, instead of engaging in the inspiring pursuit of the enemy." None of our troops were counter-marched up and down Bull Run the next day. None were on the battle-field but those detailed to collect arms, etc. Beauregard's troops had a full supply of tents, and those from the Valley a partial one. Pursuit would have been fruitless, and, therefore, anything but inspiring.

Page 236.—"The country was then teeming with supplies; herds of bullocks were feeding in the pastures around Centreville, and the barns of the farmers were loaded with grain." The country between Bull Run and Washington is poor and thinly peopled, and never teemed with supplies. If there were ever herds of bullocks in the pastures and Centreville, any Southern man can tell how many would have been left by a Federal army of four divisions (near 40,000 men), encamped there from the 17th to 21st of July; and if there was ever abundance between that place and Washington, those who have seen the country through which a Federal army has marched once, can judge of the abundance left there it has passed twice.

Page 236.—"A march of twenty-five miles could surely have been accomplished without baggage or rations, especially when the shortest cut might lead them to the spoils of a wealthy capital." It is about forty miles from the field of battle to Washington by the main road through Alexandria—perhaps four less by Munson's Hill. At the end of that march a broad navigable river would have separated our army from "the spoils of a wealthy capital."

Note.—"The numbers given above express the effective force."

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